

NO DETENTION POLICY IN SCHOOL: REMEDY OR MALADY?

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Abstract

A major research project led this paper to delve deep into the rationale and objective of the no detention policy under the right to education and its impact on the quality of education across the country. No detention policy is one of the main characteristic of the RTE act. Section 16 of the RTE act categorically lays down that 'No child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from the school till the completion of elementary education.' There have been some misgivings on the provisions relating to 'no detention' and 'no expulsion'. The 'no detention' provision is made because examinations are often used for eliminating children who obtain poor marks. Once declared 'fail', children either repeat grade or leave the school altogether. Compelling a child to repeat a class is demotivating and discouraging. A number of developed countries do not subscribe to the idea of retaining a child but we under the RTE act now have amended the act to provide for detention at the fifth and eighth standards. A number of arguments nationally and internationally stand for and against the provision of detention in school but the project field data was inclined against the detention policy citing various reasons including general decline in the quality of elementary education.

Keywords- right to free and compulsory education act, 2009; no-detention policy; continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE); grade retention.



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Introduction:

Right of education act (RTE act) is a revolutionary step towards universalization of elementary education leading to a mainstreaming of all children towards a quality and holistic learning endeavor. The act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools (except the minority institutions) to reserve 25% of seats for the poor and other categories of children. The act also provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. There is also a provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them on par with students of the same age. RTE act has various implementation policy, continuous and comprehensive evaluation, social relationships in the class and school, role of the school management committee as people's representation in the functioning of the school, among others.

No Detention policy is one of the main characteristic of the RTE Act. Section 16 of the RTE Act categorically lays down that ‘no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from the school till the completion of elementary education.’ under this policy, the students up to class VIII are automatically promoted to the next class without being held back even if they do not get a passing grade. But on 4th January 2019 the parliament amended this clause making it optional for the states to introduce exams in the 5th and 8th standers. The detained students shall be re-taught and re-examined. If they faild again the state could think of detaining them in the same class. The No-Detention policy was implemented under the RTE Act in 2010 for the holistic development of the students throughout the year and reduce the number of dropouts from the schools. This was also done to reduce the exam pressure on the students. The aims and objectives of the no detention policy in a wrong realities, to get the appropriate result, are different. Most people interpreted this policy in a wrong manner- No Detention meaning – No need of teaching and learning, when the students had to be pushed into the next class, which affect both-the teaching and learning.

This paper tries to delve deep into the rationale and objectives of the no detention policy and its impact on the quality of education across the country. In this study the researcher collected data from the headmaster, teachers, students, SMC members and parents from Pune and Beed district of Maharashtra. Randomly 33 schools were covered including aided and unaided schools. 366 respondents were interviewed for this research.

What is no detention-

The no-detention policy was introduced as a part of the continuous and comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) under the right to education Act (RTE) in 2010. Under this policy, students up to class 8 are automatically promoted to the next class without being held back even if they do not get a passing grade. The no-detention policy under the RTE Act was to ensure that no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school until the completion of elementary education.

No Detention is a commitment of the nation to every child to provide quality education with a purantee to ensure expected learning outcomes within the academic year with required support systems including remedial / additional instructions. It is not just a statement of commitment but a package-providing teachers, pedagogy, CCE, infrastructure, capacities, school working days and teacher hours, redressal and processes including monitoring. Detention de-motivates and discourages the child is young and during these years he/she forms his/her personality. Motivation and encouragements help in forming good personality.

‘National Policy on Education 1968, 1986 and 1992 provided for no Detention provision in the interests of the child. Through these policies child-centered and activity-based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. First generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction. As the child grows, the component of cognitive learning will be increased and skills organized through practice.

The national curriculum framework 2005, as per para 3.3.1, at the primary stage, the child should be engaged in joyfully exploring the world around and harmonizing with it. The objectives at this stage are to nurture the curiosity of the child about the world to have the child engage in exploratory and hands-on activities for acquiring the basic cognitive and psychomotor skills through observation, classification, inference etc. through out the primary stage, there should be no formal periodic tests, no awarding of grades or marks and no detention. Every child who attends eight years of school should be eligible to enter Class IX.

Philosophy of No-detention policy:

There have been some misgivings on the provision relating to ‘no detention’ and ‘no expulsion’. The ‘no detention’ provision is made because examinations are often used for eliminating children who obtain poor marks. Once declared ‘fail, children either repeat grade or leave the school altogether. Compelling a child to repeat a class is de-motivating and discouraging. Repeating a class does not give the child any special resources to deal with the same syllabus requirements for yet another year. Parents and friends of such children also tend to view them as being ‘fit for failure’, there by reinforcing the perception which the school has already used for declaring a child ‘fail. The ‘no detention’ provision in RTE Act provides for putting in place a continuous and comprehensive evaluation procedure- a procedure that will be non- threatening, releases the child from fear and trauma of failure and enables the best potential to improve quality, rather than punishment, fear of failure and detention. Consistent with the arguments provided under section 13 that each child has the same potential for learning, a ‘slow’, ‘weak’ learner or a ‘failed’ child is not because of any inherent drawback in the child, but most often the inadequacy of the learning environment and the delivery system to help the child, realize his/her potential, meaning there by that the failure is of the system, rather than punishing the child through detention. There is no study of research that suggest that the quality of the learning of the child improves if the child is failed. In fact, more often than not the child abandons school/ learning altogether. As regards expulsion, there are many who give examples of deviant of expulsion are that the education system has refused to serve

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the child. The notion of 'expulsion' is not compatible with the concept of 'right'. No civilized country in the world expels children from elementary school for any reasons: there are no valid grounds for doing so. If the child and remember we are talking about 6-14 years older children – does not respond to the existing system and resorts to 'deviant' activities, then the education system must address the child differently-through counseling or by providing different curricular and co-curricular activities, which enable the child to develop self-awareness, address deep rooted fears and problems and consequently change patterns of behavior.

Grade Retention or Repetition policy at International Level:

In New Zealand, secondary schools commonly use a system of internal academic streaming in which children of the same age are subdivided on the basis of ability and lower achieving students are taught in different classes and at a different rete, from higher achieving students, but are kept within their own age group. This system has largely rendered grade retention unnecessary in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

Argentina contemplates grade retention in all grades except 1st grade and the last course of high school. In elementary school students are retained when they fail one of the basic areas: math, language and social sciences. In secondary school, students are allowed a maximum of two courses failed in order to be promoted. If they fail three or more, they should repeat.

In 2010 Australia made a policy of no student repeating at any school for various reasons.

Asian countries like Japan and Korea do not allow grade retention. North Korea does not have school retention. Malaysia also does not practice grade retention. Singapore practices grade retention in secondary schools if a student is unsuccessful in achieving a satisfactory accumulated percentage grade. The school authorities may also decide that it would be more appropriate for the student to advance to a higher level in a lower stream such as in the achieving a satisfactory accumulated percentage grade. The school authorities may also decide that it would be more appropriate for the student to advance to a higher level in a lower stream such as in the cases of Express and Normal (Academic) students.

In the European countries like Norway, Denmark and Sweden do not allow grade retention during elementary school and junior high school (1-10th grade). Germany, Italy, Austria, Netherlands, France, Finland and Switzerland use grade retention.

In Finland there are no school inspections or national exams in compulsory education. Teachers assess the pupils' learning and working skills. The primary aim is to support their

learning and development. In lower grades the assessment is written and generally descriptive and in upper grades-at the latest in grade 8 – the assessment is numerical.

All pupils have the right to individual guidance and support in learning. For example remedial instruction is student's subjective right. Private teaching after the school day is uncommon. Repeating a grade is not common in Finland. The focus is instead on supporting the pupils in reaching the learning goals. Only 0.4 percent of pupils repeat a grade each year.

Arguments in Favour of the No-Detention Policy:

There are several arguments in favour of this policy. Those who favour say that:

1. NDP and CCE are based in sound principles of pedagogy and international standards. This policy ended the exam-centric education culture and concept of equality among children.
2. There is no research evidence that repeating a year would help children to do better. Instead, it would lead to more drop out.
3. Detaining children damages their self-esteem and give them a permanent inferiority complex. The older student feels humiliated and embarrassed being among students who are junior to him.
4. Detention leads to children dropping out of school and taking to vagrancy, begging and petty crime like juvenile delinquency.
5. Detention leads to loss of child's time and wealth because after having been detained, given appropriate effort from the teacher, the child may be able to cover the gaps in that class in two or three months and be fit to be promoted, but will nevertheless be forced to continue for another nine months in the same class, repeating the syllabus which he already knows.
6. Educational awareness is missing among the families from rural areas. Most of the children admitted in the school in midst of the year, lag behind and need to be detained.
7. No Detention policy has resulted in a drop in the dropout rates in elementary education.
8. There has been a steady rise in the GER at the elementary level, for both boys and girls, as well as for scheduled castes, Tribes and other marginalized section since the coming into effect of the no-detention policy.

Argument against the No-Detention policy:

1. The effect on academic achievement – where research has indicated short-term gains and long-term problems because grade repeaters eventually fall behind.
2. The effect on student self-esteem, peer relationships and attitudes towards school – with negative outcomes in these areas leading to increased risk of dropping out.

3. The effect on school operations – where by high levels of grade repetition can lead to increased class sizes and classroom management problems.
4. Automatically promoting all children to the next class takes away all incentive for them to learn or for teachers to teach. It is important to maintain the link between promotion and learning outcomes.
5. With the assurance of the promotion to the next class student become careless, non-serious, inattentive to studies and irregular in attendance. Teachers also lose their interest of teaching do not result academic improvement.
6. Students, who are promoted to a higher class without academic validation simply on the basis of the no-detention policy, do not have the required educational competence, knowledge and skill to understand the lessons being taught in the higher class.
7. The brighter students feel frustrated as the pace of the class is determined by the ability of its least competent members.
8. Reduction in the drop-out rate is an artificial construct and illusion created by the no-detention policy.
9. Teachers in Government schools strongly disapprove of the no-detention policy. In the past few years, the number of students failing their class 9 examinations has been on the increase in many States.
10. Many states have sought a review of the no-detention policy. The Government of Delhi NCR has proposed that the no-detention policy be limited up to class 3. The State Governments of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh Goa, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Tripura have requested that the policy be reviewed in representations to the sub-committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which was constituted to assess the implementation of the CCE. This review has been granted as mentioned at the start of the article.

Some findings on No-Detention policy under RTE:

The researcher found out a lot of misunderstanding regarding no-detention policy. The headmasters and the teachers were queried about no-detention policy and their opinion is as follows-

Opinion on No-Detention policy-

Interestingly nearly 70% headmasters and over 40% teachers said that a student should be held back in the same class if necessary to improve his/her quality. While just over 18% headmasters and a miniscule over 3% teachers said that the policy of non-detention was good and that the teacher was also responsible for the failure of the students and required to make

extra efforts. Over 13% teachers said that no student should be held back irrespective of academic performance till 8th standard. And over 9% headmasters and over 32% teachers felt that due to this policy the students did not study properly so they could fail in the 9th standard. And over 8% teachers significantly could not respond properly to this query of a most important provision of the RTE.

Effect on the learning of the student:

The research realized that there were many negative responses regarding no-detention policy. Most of the stakeholders took convenient meaning or understanding of this crucial policy provision. The researcher asked the teachers and parents about the positive – negative consequences of the no-detention policy on the students educational progress.

Over 21% parents and over 5% teachers thought that the no-detention policy made students careless about studying resulting in stoppage of educational development. While over 10% parents and 3% teachers felt the students were concentrating on all activities other than studying due to this policy. Significantly over 28% parents and over 21% teachers wanted to have the traditional examination system back as they thought students could not be evaluated properly under the CCE policy. And above 62% teachers and over 32% parents concurred with all the above three implications of the no-detention policy. Only over 5% teachers thought that the learning process became easier for the students due to no fear of failure.

Significantly, a majority of teacher and significant number of parents feel that the learning process is affected due to the no-detention policy. This raises question marks on the substance and structure of the learning process under the RTE. This underlines that the no detention policy has removed fear from the process of learning but the learning process without a comprehensive and relevant curriculum has failed to enthuse joy in the learning process.

It is astonishing that a huge majority of headmasters and significant number of teachers wanted to get back the provision of detention students. This is the biggest contravention of the most important provision i.e. no detention policy of the RTE act. As discussed earlier where it was mentioned that the CCE was incomplete without a comprehensive curriculum, similarly the no-detention policy is incomplete without corroborative inputs of teacher-training, multiple pedagogies, interdisciplinary and relevant curriculum, comprehensive evaluation and adequate resources for learning aids and practical along with dynamic interaction of the school with socio-cultural, commercial and industrial entities of the school neighborhood. It needs to be underlined that school are for learning purpose and not for screening out students. It is a well-documented fact that school dropouts and class repeating students mostly comprise of the

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scheduled tribes, the scheduled castes, the DTNTs and the girl child. The yester years policy of detention has been a nemesis to these students who come from underprivileged backgrounds. The no-detention policy is a major booster for the universalization of elementary education but here our data expose that a majority of headmasters and significant number of teachers want the recall of the detention policy. This is a major question mark on the very spirit of opening doors of primary education to all including the SC, ST and others. This is a huge implementation challenge and makes one wonder whether the no-detention policy should be withdrawn for seven years so that the school system and the establishment improves to a level where the question of detention would be irrelevant. This would happen only if radical changes are made as discussed earlier. But the question mark on the withdrawal on this crucial provision shall be discussed in details later.

Traditionally in India from the ancient times scriptural directives prohibited the backward castes from receiving any education, religious or utilitarian. With global cultural exposure during the British and modern times and the onset of democracy underlined by the communities of the country, we have a formal education system for the same. Our education system is based on an examination system leading to individualized competition and screening out of individuals not making it to the required mark. As discussed earlier the social, economic and educational background of the SC and ST students have made them major victims along with some others, to be failures and drop outs of the schooling system. The right to education, changing this scenario has brought in the provision of no detention till the 8th standard for all children.

Our data reveals that most of the headmaster and teachers along with some parents oppose the no detention policy. They contend that due to this policy the teachers are not under the pressure to deliver and the students along with their parents, become negligent of studies with the knowledge of each child being promoted up to 8th standard with this provision without the substantial backup for its satisfactory implementation.

Conclusion-

No detention policy actually means ensuring all children receive the prescribed levels of learning in each class which World required a draw over hole of teacher training pedagogy curriculum and teaching aids. The teacher needs to be given gather social status, as received in ancient times, far better financial incentive (better than senior college teachers as done in some Western countries) and comprehensive and continue in- service training with greater autonomy and responsibility. The curriculum needs to be relevant especially to the school and regional socio- economic Domain. It needs to be interdisciplinary interviewing the science and the

basics of social science along with primary activities like agriculture and vocational skills of the region to make it accommodative of the social diversity of the region. Relevance leads to interest that leads to understanding and to ultimate knowledge out-puts. our primary basis of memorization and presentation for learning has to be complemented by practical activities by a dynamics between the mental skills and manual efficacies. This whole process will make detention irrelevant and obsolete. But given the rate of change of our educational process radical change is too big a task for the Indian educational system. So the via media could be that the detention policy should be brought back at the 6th standard level. An amendment, as described earlier, is already been taken by the central government This prescription would look socially regressive as it undermines the socio- economic and educational handicaps of the backward caste students but the fact today is that large number of students fail in 9th standard because of being promoted upto 8th standard without the prescribed level of learning, cannot be overlooked this simply is due to incompetence of the school system to ensure no detention along with prescribed levels of learning. The failures of the 9th standard level among others obviously include large numbers of SC and ST students. So in the given situation is better to go back to detention policy so that all stake holders of the school system shall again take the troubles and responsibilities of learning. But this can only be a temporary step back for say a period of seven years. No detention is the ideal when all the above prescription are implemented to make learning a relevant and joyful process making detention completely irrelevant.

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